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## THE MORALS AND MORAL TRAINING OF HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Ruskin says that "education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know; it means teaching them to behave as they do not behave." Character-building, then, is the most important work of the school. But character is the "product of nature and nurture." It is the diploma that God gives to man upon the completion of life with all its multitudinous experiences. It is, therefore, too much to expect from the schools that a youth should come forth thence with a perfect character. It is not too much to expect, however, that the youth should come forth from the schools with the seeds of character deeply rooted in his life; that he should have a clear conception of life's purposes and a determination to fill his particular niche in the world honorably and manfully. Now, with all their faults the high schools are a potent, perhaps the most potent, single agency in the moral training of the youth. Indeed, there are those who are ready to concede to the schools a position of supremacy in this respect even over the home and the church. Let it be clearly understood, therefore, that in pointing out some of the faults of the high school the object of my remarks will be to indicate, not how to make a bad institution good, but how to make a good institution better.

As a matter of fact it is not difficult to see that many of the most glaring indications of moral weakness of the youth in school are nothing more than a reflection of the obliquity of his father as manifested in his business in the world. There seems to have grown up in our generation a "business conscience" utterly discordant with all the rules governing men in their social and domestic relations. In his book on *Applied Christianity*, Dr. Gladden found the reason for the church's declining influence upon the masses to be their unwillingness to pray on Sunday with the man who preys

on them all the rest of the week. Without a consciousness of the least bit of inconsistency a Henry H. Rogers, the kindest of fathers in the family and the most gracious of friends in social circles, becomes a merciless financier in the office of the Standard Oil Company. Thus big business corrupts smaller business, and that in turn inoculates the school and the home with its virus.

Is it any wonder, then, that under the spell of such a moral atmosphere the high-school boy should make a distinction between stealing and "swiping"? Is not the "swiping" of the schoolboy an exact counterpart of the "grafting" of the petty politician? Judge Lindsay says that "the bad example furnished by business men and public officials is a serious cause of youthful delinquency." Hence it is that a skilled locksmith finds it hard to devise a locker that can be counted on as proof against the youthful "swiper." Moreover, the pervasiveness of these influences is startlingly demonstrated by the fact that the guilty in the schools not infrequently come from homes of apparent culture and refinement.

Then, too, some of the school youth's doubtful morals are directly traceable to the subtle influence of college halls. Outrages which are punishable with fine or even imprisonment under civil law and which should subject the offender to public contempt are regarded as matters of boasting in college life and conscience; and, worse still, the college vandal is often shielded from exposure and proper punishment by a false community sentiment.

Furthermore, the glory of the college athlete has dimmed the glory of the scholar. A football game between any two big universities will be paraded in print and the participants pictured in athletic postures, but a debate or an oratorical contest will receive a scant notice, if it does not pass entirely unnoticed. The undue stress laid upon winning and the inordinate craving for newspaper notoriety has brought in its train abuses tending to neutralize all the physical and moral benefits presumably arising out of a sensible participation in athletic sports. A few years ago, when the craze seemed to have reached its climax, it was not at all uncommon even for college presidents to receive letters from conceited youths, offering their athletic prowess for a price; and President Faunce was quoted as saying that if the letters that pass between college

athletic managers and secondary-school boys could be published they would startle the country.

Is it any wonder, then, that a boy sometimes suddenly "loses a year from his age" in an effort to prove his eligibility; and, worse still, that public sentiment and even parents often try to shield him in his duplicity? The effect of all these college influences upon the secondary schools is to be deprecated. Boys trained in the wily ways of the unscrupulous athlete are almost sure to become the future leaders "in the art of evading taxes, manipulating courts, and outwitting the law of the land" instead of "being found in the ranks of municipal reform or civic virtue." And this kind of thing, largely chargeable to the sporty element of alumni associations of the bigger colleges and universities in the larger cities, does not seem to have entirely disappeared even yet. A few years ago a big state university, prompted by a desire to increase its measure of helpfulness to the high schools in that state, sent out a circular proffering its assistance to the schools and asking for suggestions as to how mutual good relationship might best be fostered. The circular asked the principals among other questions these two unfortunate ones; unfortunate because of the pernicious activity in various parts of the state of sporty alumni in collusion with the university coach and athletic management: "Is the University doing anything that is harmful to the high schools? If so, what do you suggest to correct it?" The principals who had been viewing the pernicious proselyting activity with disfavor replied almost with one voice: "Yes. Dismiss your football coach."

Even private and Sunday schools are not immune; they seem to have caught the contagion. Two Sundays of attendance at a Bible class to render a boy eligible to a team has sometimes been satisfied by attendance by proxy. In a recent article in the *School Weekly* a high-school principal says that he noticed the names of two of his lusty boys as participants in a Sunday-school track-meet. As one of them was a Catholic and the other a Jew the principal was naturally curious to know the facts. Upon investigation he found that they were just plain "ringers." The same writer relates another interesting experience bearing on this point: A boy appeared in his office to enrol in the school. The private school

from which he had come lays claim to consideration because of its strong moral influences. The boy grew eloquent as he told his new principal that his school "never lost a game on their home grounds. Once, when it looked like a defeat, the master put in under an assumed name a big graduate, who turned the impending defeat to a victory." The boy's father was present and with a chuckle of satisfaction assured the quizzical principal of the truthfulness of the story. The ethical training received in that private school was probably as valuable as that imparted in another school which used to herald its clean moral atmosphere through the medium of well-worded advertisements. The venerable master himself imparted the biblical instructions. In one of his examinations on the Bible he asked the question: "Who gave whom what where?" The correct answer was, "God gave Moses the tables of stone on Mt. Sinai." Such a lucid question, however, naturally brought forth a variety of answers, more or less correct, chiefly less. But the answer that probably reflected the real value of the instruction was this: "Fitzsimmons gave Corbett one on the solar plexus."

Another source of immoral inspiration which finds its way into the schools is the widely heralded escapades of the so-called "smart set" and of the idle rich. The craze of the shallow-brained for social excitement and the publicity given to their frivolity and extravagance have a bad effect on the morals of many families of small means who cannot resist the temptation to imitate the "smart set" by "putting on appearances." Disclosures in divorce suits in New York call attention to the insane rivalry among wealthy Americans to outdo one another in dress and luxurious living. So much time is consumed and so much energy exhausted by these "fashion plates" in catering to their vanity that they neglect their children (if they have any), their homes, and all the nobler instincts of the human soul. Much discontent and unhappiness and a large part of the immorality and crime of this country is due to the influence of this ostentatious flaunting of wealth in the faces of the less favored. The bankers of a city noted for its automobile manufactories, it is said, had to come to a mutual agreement to refuse to mortgage people's homes for the purchase

of automobiles. Many families were ready to sacrifice the best things they had just to get into the swing of fashionable society. This mania reaches down into the schools. Here, too, every nerve is strained to break into the stratum above. Boys in straitened circumstances, aping the actions of "swell society," will hire carriages, or even automobiles, to take girls to dances. When school authorities insist on holding high-school dances in the gymnasium so as to make them less expensive and more democratic, the functions go begging for patronage. The effect of all this false living, this constant practice of deception in appearances, is making many of our young people superficial and vain. All sociological writers agree that it is environment that makes the youth bad. Instead of blaming the boy, then, we must get after the environment and try to correct it.

Fortunately, the tide is turning; there is noticeable a general awakening of the public conscience. The doctrine of the "square deal," the advocacy of the "simple life," the "back-to-the-soil" movement are some of the symptoms in the social, industrial, and business world which are striking a responsive chord in the hearts of men and women in all walks of life. And similarly, within the schools we are feeling a change of attitude in the remedial measures suggested from within as well as from without. Higher standards of efficiency in the teaching corps; closer faculty supervision of all school activities; closer co-operation between school and home; reduction of the temptations surrounding the youth of the school; an effort to instil in the youthful breast a greater respect for constituted authority; physical, vocational, industrial, and moral education; standardization of administrative usages and methods; better salaries and longer tenure for teachers; state and interstate certification of teachers; retirement funds for teachers; legislation against high-school fraternities—these are among the signs which give promise of larger and better things.

I shall try to enlarge somewhat on three of these hopeful signs and to emphasize their bearings on the high-school youth's morals. There is much promise in the efforts to raise the efficiency of the teaching profession and the methods employed to that end. Nothing, for instance, could have been more asinine than the plans

for certification of teachers in common use up to a short time ago and still in use in many communities. The standardization of colleges and universities and normal schools and a disposition properly to respect their diplomas will result in raising the teaching force to a higher level of proficiency. Likewise, the lengthening of the tenure of office and the payment of better salaries may be regarded as a step to attract and hold men and women of character and ambition. With such reforms it will be easier to demand and expect higher scholastic attainments and broader teaching experience. Of all the factors that enter into the making of a good school there is none that is larger than the teacher. By the acquisition of a greater number of broad-gauge, sympathetic, well-trained, and gifted teachers, great progress will have been made in raising the moral tone of a high school. Personal influence and personal contact is perhaps the most important factor in moral development. The uplift that comes from contact with teachers of strong, virile personality is one of the best things the school gives to a boy. The adolescent is hard to handle. He is neither man nor boy. It is difficult to understand him; he does not understand himself. He is supersensitive; he has a keen sense of justice; he has strong likes and dislikes; he is easily offended, quick to "fly off the handle"; and yet he often responds readily to treatment. All depends upon the teacher's tact, firmness, and fairness; his ability to see clearly and yet overlook for the time, and often for all time, the boy's caprice. Talent is no match for tact in a high-school room. If the teacher in the grades requires greater teaching skill and the college professor needs higher scholarship, the secondary-school teacher must possess a peculiar combination of gifts with tact at their center. This is especially needed in dealing with the youth outside of the classroom in his various social, dramatic, and athletic activities. Here the teacher's ingenuity is taxed to the utmost. He must be one of them and yet never stoop exactly to their level. It is so easy at this point to "slop over." The students must feel free and easy in his presence and yet never forget that he is their leader and that a proper respect is due him. The following characterization of a teacher by his pupil is an illustration of a schoolmaster not properly poised: "He is kind and

sympathetic and lets us do anything and everything until he gets mad and then he jumps on the wrong fellow."

With a larger number of well-qualified teachers in the service of the schools the problem of closer supervision of their many activities will be facilitated. And this is the point at which the opportunity for bringing home moral lessons most often presents itself. Real training for life consists, among other things, of the acquisition of the power of tactful adjustment of one's self to what is known as public sentiment. The close approach of the various school activities to the condition in the world outside affords this opportunity better than a classroom. Lessons, just such as the boy needs to learn for good citizenship, are derived from properly supervised athletics and from the many other activities which constitute for the youth a miniature social world. Here obstinacy, passion, selfishness, pride are discovered quickly, and punishment in the form of social disapproval follows speedily in the wake of their manifestation; on the other hand, a boy's unselfishness, respect for authority, self-control, generosity receive their speedy rewards at the hands of his social equals; this is the kind of interplay that affords natural opportunities for the development of character. It is not easy for school boards, and sometimes even for school superintendents, to realize what time-consuming occupations high-school activities are and how much they tax the teaching force. But the socializing of the schools in the best sense of the word is the order of the day; for not to recognize the social instincts of the adolescent is to do violence to his nature. Education must aim at wholeness, and therefore the social instinct must be given a chance to express itself under proper guidance. It takes a great deal more time and far more patience to guide students through the intricacies of a class or club organization than it does to just do the thing one's self or to let the students do it themselves in a bungling way. Until comparatively recently there was a tendency either to let school activities take care of themselves or to squelch them. The latter policy proved impossible and fomented the very things which we are trying to stop now by the help of state-wide legislation. The *laissez-faire* policy, on the other hand, offered an opportunity for all the abuses of the ward politician to creep



in, especially in the larger activities, involving the handling of money. Instead of teaching the youth self-reliance and honesty, the activity became a school for grafters. The ticket-seller and the ticket-collector soon worked hand in glove. All the tricks of the "scalper" were everywhere in evidence. Complimentaries were freely issued and as freely sold by those receiving them. Each successive season hundreds of dollars were spent for equipment and supplies and at the end of the season there was little or nothing to show for it. Sweaters, blankets, stockings, shoes, footballs, baseballs, bats, masks, gloves, ankle-braces, everything was "swiped" or appropriated.

Happily, these conditions are almost entirely a thing of the past. The faculty adviser carefully supervises the treasurer, the manager, the custodian. He instructs the treasurer in proper bookkeeping, countersigns the manager's requisitions to make them valid, and has all the reports properly audited by the head of the commercial department, the school's official auditor. Happily, too, the days of the season athletic coach who had no connection with the school are over, or nearly so. The coach exerts a powerful influence for good when he is made of the right stuff, and no other kind of a man can long hold out when he becomes a member of the teaching corps.

A moral uplift of the high school may be expected also from the growing interest in the vitalization and socialization of the subjects of study. The world's store of knowledge is greater each year, but human capacity is limited and length of life is still only "three score years and ten." This fact has led rather naturally to the detachment of knowledge from life, for it is impossible for anyone to make use of all the material at his command even in one special department of knowledge. If we believe the dictum of Arnold Tompkins that "the true end of teaching is one with the true aim of life," we must stop stuffing the youth's mind with matter which he cannot put to the test of trial in his daily experience. Thus alone may we hope to restore the close intimacy of relationship which should exist between the knowledge taught the boy in the schoolroom and the life he lives and will live outside the schoolroom. The most natural kind of education, that which is formative of

right conduct and right living, we have provided in these days for the rebel in the reformatories or for the negro at Tuskegee. If we could form the youth aright by training his "hand to join his head in a common effort," perhaps we should not have to reform him by a similar process later on at much greater expense to the state, at greater waste of time to himself, and with less probability of the permanent success of our efforts. An education which fails to fuse with his inborn inclination to do things is ill adapted to the best development of the normal boy. Our education tries to reconstruct him and give him a "symmetrical development" in accordance with some pedagogical notion.

"Interest a boy in useful occupation," says Fra Elbertus, "and you transform chaos into cosmos." Interest the blue-eyed barbarians of Northern Europe in useful occupations and you transform the barbarian as well as the country he lives in. For several centuries the monasteries were veritable industrial centers, and the wilderness and solitary places around them were transformed into green grasses and gardens. "Then by productive labor," says DeGarmo, "man has been raised from barbarism to civilization and his progress in civilization has been secured by the same process."

Thus it is that the education of the country lad with its accompanying home duties and responsibilities has been a means of cogent moral training to him. The artificial devices conjured up to keep the city lad busy and teach him the lesson of usefulness are not comparable in their effectiveness to the stern demands of the family woodbox; and that is only a symbol of numerous other duties and demands equally urgent, all of which serve to impress his mind with the notion that he has work to do on earth and daily duties to perform. Contrast this kind of training with the city lad's chase for amusement at picture shows or his quest for adventure with the neighborhood gang. The country boy is laying a firm moral foundation when he learns early in life that there is work to do each day which he cannot shirk without a speedy penalty, without interfering with the household and inflicting discomfort upon everyone within it. But in our days most boys are not living in the "lap of nature where they might come under

the moral spell of the kindling-wood box or the aesthetic spell of the changing moods and phases of field and sky." It is, therefore, the duty of the city schools to re-establish, as far as possible, the lost relationship between life and learning. We must quit teaching "art for art's sake" and "culture as its own reward" and "mathematics merely to sharpen the wits." The pedagogue must part with his passion to teach every study as an end in itself, for what nature has bound together he cannot separate with impunity. It is not without significance that the highest happiness and the greatest good has ever been concealed beneath the sternest difficulties and their attainment made conditional upon a struggle for existence. Too long has emphasis been laid upon the merely intellectual side of school work as if the human soul could be reclaimed by means of the multiplication table. "He that would know must do." The lack of something useful to do has had a tendency to make our towns and cities moral and intellectual graveyards for our boys. Tolstoi said that "you cannot develop moral character without labor," and Ruskin advocated the surrounding of parish schools with land and shops. Booker T. Washington has demonstrated that education may throb with human interest. His students earn a living while they are getting their education. Their subjects of study are thus permeated with, and consecrated to, living ends.

Finally, I believe that the efficiency of the high school in moral training will be greatly enhanced by the introduction of some positive moral instruction. "It will not do to argue that morals cannot be taught except by the unconscious influence of example. To know what is right and wrong is a necessary condition of selecting the right and rejecting the wrong. Without this knowledge there can be no moral act."

However, I am well aware of the dangers involved in the introduction of moral instruction. It goes without saying "that moral training is not put into the schools by giving it a special period on the daily program. That would seem to be evidence that there are periods when morality is not present." It is true that France with all of its elaborate system of intellectualized ethics in the schools is not credited with a superabundance of morality, and that

Germany's method of religious instruction falls far short of our expectations if we accept the following quotation from a German scholar: "Religion as taught in the Berlin *Gymnasium* which I attended had nothing to do with life. Its teaching killed the religious spirit and did not encourage morality." It is also true that a book of ethics in the hands of some teachers would be a huge joke, and that some teachers are a source of constant moral uplift to their students by the unconscious influence of their example.

No doubt much splendid work in moral training is constantly being done by the "incidental method." It is likewise a fact that the high-school curriculum is already crowded, but the traditional college and high-school subjects may well give way, if need be, in order that the school may do its best toward the achievement of its primary purpose—character development. "Incidental" moral training cannot be depended on to inculcate in the student's mind a clear conception of a moral standard. Moral training should form a diet instead of consisting of occasional doses. The problem is not the formation of isolated habits, but the inculcation of moral principles and the enthronement of ideals which shall be of universal validity. The "incidental" method reduces moral training to a by-product of school work and that is not enough; the problem is rather that of the "formation of habits of social imagination and conception—the habit of interpreting the special incidents that occur and the particular situations that present themselves in terms of the whole social life."

New occasions have been teaching us new duties. "We know now better than we did two generations ago that universal education is not a panacea for moral ills: the citizen's ability to read his ballot is no proof that he will not sell his vote." Good habits practiced in the schoolroom do not necessarily manifest themselves on the playground. Respect for physical law does not imply equal respect for moral law. The mere fact that a boy has become skilled in making a square joint in the school shop does not guarantee that he will do the "square thing" in all his life's situations. Something is needed to widen the spirit of a habit so that it may become a persistent attitude capable of easy transference into related and unrelated habits. With the inculcation of special habits there should go, according to Professor Coe, the formation of a "conscious

ideal" to furnish a "conscious meaning and motive for the habit." Tompkins says that "the high school has its special opportunity in enthroning ideals," but this fact has received very little recognition in the courses of study. The high-school age is the "supreme opportunity for character-building" according to Professor Sisson, because it is "marked by the transition from the stage of imitation and obedience to that of volitional intelligence and self-direction."

The development of character is a complex and perhaps a life-long process, as was said above. It involves the right direction of sentiment, the bracing of the will, and the clear, intellectual grasp of an ideal of duty. Formal ethical instruction is only a single formula in this complex process, but it is the one commonly omitted in our schools, chiefly because it has been assumed that morality must have a religious sanction. The legal exclusion of religious instruction from the common schools has led many to feel that such exclusion means the barring of moral teaching also. That is, however, an unwarranted assumption, for effective moral teaching is possible without the assignment of any sanction. But even if a teacher's philosophy compels him to assign religion as his sanction for the teaching of morals, he need not be utterly discouraged by this act of exclusion. Religion in the best sense of the word has not been legislated out of the public schools. Sectarianism has been excluded, as it should be, but that is quite a different thing. To exclude religion completely would involve the exclusion of all teachers who make any profession of religious faith, for religion is essentially a life. If it does not manifest itself in the life, it does not exist in the heart. No constitution or legislature has ever objected to religion as exemplified in the upright life of a teacher.

What, then, can the teacher do to broaden the spirit of those good habits commonly formed in the school so as to render them more capable of being carried over into life-situations in general?

Thomas Arnold taught his students "moral thoughtfulness" to accomplish this end. That expression and the "conscious ideal and moral reflection" of George Albert Coe and the "ethical enlightenment" of Edward O. Sisson are one and the same thing, still differently expressed in the phraseology of Charles DeGarmo, who says that "ethical interest is the bridge between knowledge and conduct," and gives the following definition of ethical interest:

"An ethical interest is a natural feeling of sympathy with others, of good will toward them, of love for them and their welfare, transformed by insight into a larger social impulse to conserve the highest welfare of individual and group."

Professor Frank C. Sharp, of the University of Wisconsin, and Henry Neuman, of the Ethical Culture School of New York, have outlined what seems to me the most comprehensive high-school course for the development of this "moral thoughtfulness" to serve the students as a bridge to connect their knowledge with their conduct. In their words: "The primary purpose of the first year's work is the development of the *will to do right* by arousing moral enthusiasm through contagion. The means employed are the study of the biographies of Americans, including members of our own generation. The fundamental purpose of this part of the course is to awaken and stimulate the better nature through the influence of other lives." The second semester of the first year contemplates the study of what the authors call "contemporary progress" in city, state, and nation, the latter furnishing the bulk of the material. A number of such national progressive movements and contemporary leaders of national prominence identified with each of these movements is then cited. For instance, here are a few: government supervision and control of interstate corporations, Roosevelt; conservation of natural resources, Pinchot; progress of our new colonies, Taft; systematic crusade for the betterment of public health, Professor Irving Fischer; fight against communicable diseases, Dr. Walker Reed; struggle for pure-food laws, Dr. Wiley; the housing of the poor, Robert DeForrest; settlement work, Jane Addams; fight against child labor, Florence Kelley; the uplifting of the negro, Booker T. Washington; reformation of juvenile delinquents, Judge Lindsay, and, in another direction, Mr. George, in the founding of the George Junior Republic; agricultural education, Dr. Knapp; the beautification of the cities, F. Robinson; improved municipal government, Mayor Whitlock, of Toledo, and such men as Luther Burbank and Louis Brandeis.

The specific results it is hoped to obtain from this course are, first, a realization on the part of the pupil that society is an organism so that nothing human

*can* be foreign to him because nothing can happen which sooner or later will not affect his interests and affect them, oftentimes, profoundly. In the second place, he will discover that much that is best in his own life is the gift of those who have been willing to struggle, sometimes in obscurity, often misunderstood, always, or at least usually, waging a desperate battle against the inertia, prejudice, or selfishness of powerful interests in society. Finally, the pupil will come to realize that there is such a thing as progress and that the world is slowly growing better.

The first year in the high school is largely experimental; many students come simply to see what it is like and others come to satisfy the last year of their compulsory attendance. Those who enter successfully upon the second year are more likely to remain throughout the course. This is given as the reason for making the first year's work in moral instruction different both in content and method from that in the following years. To quote the same authors again: "In the girls and boys who *now* form our classes we find three characteristics: first, the demand for liberty, with its other side, the revolt against authority; second, a tendency to reflection; third, awakening of the social sentiments. The work of the last three years must be planned with constant reference to these facts." In the second year they would discuss the "history, character, and purpose of the American school," and secondly, "the management of the mind," that is, the study of simple applied psychology. In the third and fourth years they would lay stress on "an analysis of moral situations in order to discover, first, what course of action is right; second, what is involved in the choice of the right and wrong course respectively, and, third, how to bring oneself to do the right." The primary aim is the development of "moral thoughtfulness in order to guide the will in its attempt to do right and to arouse and strengthen devotion to the ends recognized as binding."

In closing I wish to quote one of the ten resolutions adopted by the last Moral Education Conference held in Teachers' College about two years ago: "That *direct moral instruction*, varying in content according to conditions, systematic or otherwise according to personal preference, be employed as a means of moral education, with the special object of developing the power and habits of moral thoughtfulness."